

## Children's homes inspection – Full

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>01/12/2016</b>
<b>Unique reference number</b>	<b>1240801</b>
<b>Type of inspection</b>	<b>Full</b>
<b>Provision subtype</b>	<b>Children's home</b>
<b>Registered provider</b>	<b>Inspire Children's Services</b>
<b>Registered provider address</b>	<b>121 Church Street, St Helens, WA10 1AJ</b>

<b>Responsible individual</b>	<b>Paul Keogh</b>
<b>Registered manager</b>	<b>Michael Bradshaw</b>
<b>Inspector</b>	<b>Lynn O'Driscoll</b>

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>01/12/2016</b>
<b>Previous inspection judgement</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>This inspection</b>	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>	<b>Good</b>
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Good</b>

**1240801**

## **Summary of findings**

### **The children's home provision is good because:**

- The young person currently living at this home is extremely happy, safe and settled and has expressed his wish to stay until he feels ready for independence.
- This home provides a warm and nurturing environment, and the staff have the proven ability to quickly establish open and trusting relationships with young people.
- Good staffing ratios enable the staff to be very attentive to individual needs and preferences.
- Young people enjoy taking part in a wide range of constructive activities that have demonstrably increased their self-esteem and confidence.
- Staff work in partnership with families to quickly re-establish constructive contact for young people and to ensure it remains a positive experience for all concerned.
- This home actively and effectively supports young people to ensure they receive the education that is most appropriate and best meets their individual emotional, behavioural and learning needs, in order that they can reach their full potential.
- Staff safely and effectively manage some complex and challenging behaviours without the need for police assistance.
- This home is well managed by a suitably qualified, experienced and child-focused individual who leads by example. He provides clear direction, supervision and support to his staff and ensures they receive timely training opportunities to meet organisational needs, individual young people's needs and to further their own personal development.
- There are two requirements and three recommendations arising from this inspection. These are to improve notifications to Ofsted, sanction and restraint records, and the physical environment; to ensure timely independent return interviews when a child returns from going missing; and to demonstrate that staff actively support each child to achieve their individual educational targets.

## What does the children's home need to do to improve?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meet(s) the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must notify Ofsted without delay if an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40(3)(b))	14/02/2017
The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes the time and location of the use of the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(a)(iii))	14/02/2017

### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- Demonstrate that the staff understand and support each child's educational targets. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 27, paragraph 5.11)
- Make sure there is an effective system in place for ensuring that all young people, on their safe return from being missing, have the opportunity to talk to an independent person about their reasons for going missing. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- Demonstrate that children are given a genuine choice with regard to how their bedroom is decorated. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.19)

## Full report

### Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two young people at any given time who may be experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties or have learning disabilities.

This is the first inspection after the home's registration.

### Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
N/A: first inspection following registration.		

## Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>	<b>Good</b>
<p>Two young people moved into this home together in June 2016, having previously chosen their bedrooms. They have ample garden space and enjoy working on their own vegetable patch; they also helped to build their own furniture. This demonstrates that they take pride in their new surroundings. Moreover, this home enables them to play safely outside on their scooters and bicycles. One young person said, 'I like this new house and all the staff here. I feel safe and want to stay. Then when I grow up I would like to be a foster carer.'</p> <p>Initially, they settled quickly, but then struggled over the summer holidays. This was exacerbated by some staff changes and culminated in one young person recently moving on after one year nine months with this company. He was extremely sad to leave, but his behaviours were negatively impacting on his peer.</p> <p>This means there is currently one young person living at this home and he is clearly enjoying the one-to-one attention. Moreover, his behaviours have improved, his anxieties have lessened and he has stopped causing criminal damage. He said, 'I'm fine about being here on my own and I have not got into any trouble since.'</p> <p>Staff provide a nurturing environment with clear, consistent routines and boundaries. This includes, for example, sitting down together around the dining table enjoying homemade nutritious meals, and having a bath and being read to before settling to bed.</p> <p>There is clear evidence that when one young person had a fixed-period exclusion, the staff persisted in ensuring that he completed educational activities during school hours. Moreover, this confident staff team then effectively challenged the school, who wanted him to continue with an online educational programme rather than return to school full time. He is now in this company's own school. This immediately improved his motivation and his attendance quickly increased from 77% to 89%. He also contributed fully to his last personal educational planning meeting. Care staff stay with him throughout the school day which supports his complex emotional, behavioural and learning needs effectively, so he can reach his full potential. Consequently, he is now already meeting national expectations in numeracy. The head teacher said, 'The school get regular updates and handovers from this care team. This home is very quick to respond when the school require advice or assistance.' However, he has made limited progress in reading and writing, and there is no documentary evidence in the home of staff helping him to achieve his specific educational targets in these subjects.</p>	

Young people's opinions and feelings are central to the day-to-day running of the home, which increases their self-esteem. The staff also ensure that their wishes are positively acted upon, if it is in their best interests.

Young people positively engage in frequent individual key-worker sessions where highly relevant concerns and some sensitive issues are fully explored. Recent examples include: e-safety, children's guide updates, puberty, fitness, testicular cancer, oral hygiene, and cycle safety. The current young person said, 'The staff here really listen to me and support me.' A further example is his attendance and contribution to his children looked after review, where he openly expressed his wish to stay at this home. The independent chair particularly highlighted the detailed report from the home which informed their discussions and decisions.

The staff actively support constructive contact arrangements with family and friends. This helps young people to better understand their own backgrounds and retain their unique identities. One young person regularly has friends round for a meal and to play, and has been invited to their birthday parties.

Birthdays at this home are always celebrated in style. One young person said, 'My birthday has gone on and on. Staff took me to play crazy golf and then a Chinese buffet. My best friend came round yesterday for a birthday tea and I am having a party with my friends and sister at a play centre this weekend.'

Young people's health and well-being is actively promoted. Most notably, the staff have patiently and sensitively provided effective encouragement and support to ensure young people attend all required health checks. This is significant progress for one young person who previously refused to attend because it triggered anxieties.

Also, good daily routines mean personal hygiene has much improved at this home and one young person is noticeably taking pride in his appearance due to his increased self-esteem. Enuresis has stopped. One young person said, 'I have a nice bathroom to myself with a bath and a shower, and my own toiletries and electric toothbrush.'

One young person is extremely active and is involved in local sports clubs, including rugby, football and wrestling. Consequently, he has made lots of new friends outside the care system, which has strengthened his sense of belonging.

Appropriate specialist services are in place to help meet young people's more complex needs. Consequently, the current young person's speech has significantly improved in this placement. One young person said, 'I used to self-harm much more than I do here.' His emotional-health worker said, 'The staff have always been very supportive of our work and always prioritise the needs of the child.'

A key strength of this company is that it invests in the provision of a particularly

wide range of constructive activities, which demonstrably improve young people's social skills and self-esteem. Sea fishing is very popular. Comments from young people include, 'The activities are very good here. I've just been on a football tour, to a chocolate factory and trampolining'; 'We went on holiday in the summer and had a great time'; and, 'We have lots of my favourite board games and electronic games in the house.'

Individual interests and talents are actively encouraged and supported, which further strengthens confidence and competencies. One young person said, 'I'm a decent football player and I'm pretty fast.' Up until they left the home, another young person volunteered at a local snooker club, cleaning the tables in exchange for free games.

There are good opportunities for all the young people to gain age- and ability-appropriate life skills needed to prepare them for future independent living. Comments from young people include, 'I saved up my clothing money and had £170 to spend, so I've got loads of clothes', and, 'I keep my bedroom clean and tidy and take down my dirty washing and put it in the machine.'

One young person took part in a charity head-shave. He also typed out lots of words for his peer to support him in improving his speech. These examples demonstrate empathy and respect for others, which is significant progress for this young person, especially given his recognised condition.

Families and social workers are consistently highly satisfied with the quality of care provided at this home. They all highlight positive working relationships. Comments include, 'Contact with my grandson is going well and I am happy with everything at the home. I get on great with the staff, who are all friendly, and his emotional and physical health is promoted'; 'I have a good working relationship with this home and receive regular updates and information about my young person's progress'; and, 'There is very good partnership working with this home who provide my young person with the safety and stability he needs and a varied activity programme.'

	Judgement grade
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
The one young person currently in placement remains very happy and settled at this home after a number of previous disruptions. He is particularly secure in the knowledge that this is a long-term placement until he feels ready to move into independence.	



He likes and enjoys the particularly good and trusting relationships that he has with all of the staff team, and said, 'My key worker is the best ever.' This means he is becoming increasingly comfortable with sharing past traumatic events and the intense feelings this evokes. His social worker said, 'The staff are committed to him. They provide a nurturing environment and vital emotional support. They are meeting his needs on every level and have worked hard to improve his behaviours.'

This home provides a good choice of communal space. However, there have been episodes of young people going missing, albeit for a short period of time. This was new behaviour for both boys. That said, on each occasion they returned of their own accord within an hour and told staff they had kept themselves safe. Also, a timely individual session took place to try to avoid a re-occurrence. As an example, one young person said he was missing the other young person, who was on holiday, and was anxious that his aunt wouldn't turn up for contact. In response, the home arranged contact with his sister, which he was very happy about. He said, 'I was completely safe. I have lived in the area for seven years so I just walked about, but I am going to try to not do it again.' Another young person said, 'I just wanted some time away from the house. I only went to the shop to get a drink and then we played some football.'

Placing authorities were kept fully informed and independent return interviews requested, but none were undertaken. This was especially pertinent on one occasion when the young person said he was not happy on his return.

During the school holidays both young people struggled with the relaxation of routines. This resulted in an increase in criminal damage and restraints. Staff showed tremendous resilience over this difficult period and supported each other by working extra shifts. An independent visitor highlighted that, 'The staff have managed [the young people's] behaviours extremely well, a view supported by their social workers. Their positivity is to be applauded.' A social worker said, 'The home works well with the placing authority and meets all my young person's needs. He has a good relationship with the staff and is very settled. He can be disruptive, which is managed well by the staff.'

Nevertheless, notice was recently and very reluctantly served on one young person.

Despite some sustained and extremely challenging behaviours, there has only been one occasion when the police were called for assistance. However, in hindsight, the manager recognises that this incident should have been notified to Ofsted.

Records clearly demonstrate that when restraint is necessary, the least restrictive hold is always used for the shortest period of time. There is also good evaluation by the manager to help check that practice is safe and effective. However, there is no specific record kept of the location, which is helpful information for monitoring patterns and trends.

Reparation is appropriately used to avoid unnecessarily criminalising young people. However, one incident was not recorded in the sanctions book.

This home demonstrates a good balance between the positive reinforcement of good behaviour and effort, and the sanctioning of negative behaviours. Furthermore, there is close scrutiny and good advice from the manager to ensure fair and proportionate use of sanctions at all times. However, in practice, this is not always relayed in time to reverse the sanction. Moreover, the time and exact location are not consistently being detailed as is legally required.

School has started again, clear and consistent routines and boundaries have resumed, and there have been no incidents for 50 consecutive days.

Internal and independent health and safety checks are undertaken at the required frequencies. These ensure that the building is safe and well maintained. However, an independent reviewing officer's first impression was that, 'The home is a little impersonal compared to the previous home.' There has also been a delay in the personalisation of young people's rooms due to consistent criminal damage.

The well-established and stringent recruitment and selection processes in place ensure a safe workforce.

	Judgement grade
<b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>	<b>Good</b>
<p>This is the first inspection following registration with Ofsted on 16 June 2016. All the staff benefit from monthly, good-quality supervision and timely annual appraisals, which young people contribute to. These processes support and challenge the individual performances of the staff, which continually enables them to improve their practices. They also feel comfortable with exploring issues openly and honestly in team meetings, thus ensuring an agreed and consistent approach to meeting individual young people's needs. Moreover, good staffing ratios at all times enable the team to provide highly personalised care and to respond positively to young people's competing personal preferences.</p> <p>The vast majority of the team have the qualifications required for their respective roles. They also benefit from continuous and relevant training opportunities. These are purposely offered to meet organisational needs, their own professional development needs and the specific needs of the young people currently living in the home. In fact, an independent visitor recently highlighted that, 'This manager</p>	

is a perfectionist and clearly focused on taking this new team to a new level of their professional development.'

There are effective internal and external monitoring processes in place. The most recent six-month review by the manager of the quality of care provided in his home is honest, accurate, evaluative and analytical. Also, the actions raised to continually improve are informed by the views of young people, parents and stakeholders. Furthermore, these are frequently reviewed with the staff team, so there is a strong sense of shared responsibility and accountability.

Independent monthly monitoring visits to the home are firmly established. This company has also recently strengthened the process to ensure Ofsted receives these reports in a more timely manner. The statement of purpose is regularly reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure it always accurately reflects the current aims, policies, practices and staffing of the home.

## What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted)

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